

INTRODUCTION TO THE CALFRESH PROGRAM



CALFRESH 101

What is CalFresh



Federally, the Food Stamp Program is known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP



CalFresh is the new name in California for the Food Stamp Program



A Brief History



Food Stamp Act of 1964 – August 31, 1964

- The Food Stamp Program was made permanent by Congress.
- The goal of the Act was to strengthen the agricultural economy and provide improved levels of nutrition among low-income households.
- The Food Stamp Program was optional to states.
- By July 1, 1974, the program began operating nationwide.



A Brief History (cont.)

- Farm Bill of 2008
 - The emphasis was on increasing participation in the program by increasing income deductions, resource limits; by providing more money for nutrition education, outreach activities and other program changes.
- New Program Name
 - Assembly Bill (AB) 433 (Statutes of 2008) required the State to develop a new name for the Food Stamp Program. CalFresh is California's new program name.



Program Overview

- National eligibility standards and benefit levels are established by Congress and administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).
- CalFresh benefits are 100% federally funded.





Overview (cont.)

- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is the designated single state agency responsible for program supervision at the state level with county administration of the program.
- California currently serves approximately 4.1 million persons and issues approximately \$8 billion in CalFresh benefits annually.

Overview (cont.)



- To participate in CalFresh, households must meet certain income eligibility standards.
- A household is a group of individuals who purchase and prepare meals together.

Overview (cont.)

- Gross income cannot exceed 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) except for households which include at least one elderly or disabled member.
- Net income cannot exceed 100% of the FPL for all households.

Overview (cont.)



- Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is the method of distribution for CalFresh benefits via a plastic debit card.
- By using the EBT card, cardholders can access food benefits through point-of-sale (POS) terminals at stores and Farmers' Markets authorized by the USDA to accept CalFresh benefits.



Overview (cont.)

- Grocers are reimbursed directly by the federal government for the dollar value of CalFresh benefits used by recipients to purchase food items.
- Benefits cannot be used for purchases of cigarettes, alcohol or any item not authorized by USDA.



Application Process

Applying for CalFresh Benefits

- Clients can apply by submitting a CalFresh application to their local county CalFresh office on-line, in person, by phone, fax, e-mail, or mail.
- The application is considered filed if it includes the applicant's name, address, and signature.
- An interview is required and the application and required forms must be signed under penalty of perjury.

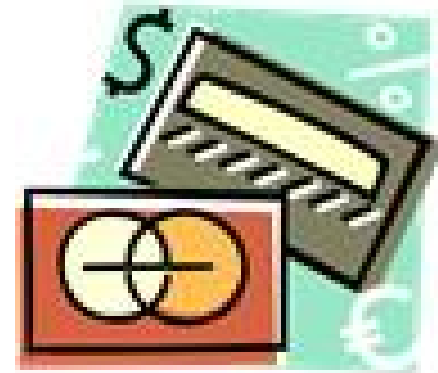
Application Process (cont.)



Interviews

- There are three ways to interview:
 - Face-to-Face = conducted in person
 - Telephone = conducted by phone
 - Interactive = paperless interview where Eligibility Worker (EW) enters the information in the system during the interview.

Application Process (cont.)



Verification (Factors of Eligibility)

- Mandatory verification includes the following:
 - Identification
 - Citizenship (if questionable)
 - Immigration Status of Noncitizens
 - Residency
 - Social Security Number (SSN)
 - Gross Income
 - Disability
 - Hours of Work, etc.



Components to Consider

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>130% of FPL</u>
1	\$1,211
2	\$1,640
3	\$2,069
4	\$2,498
5	\$2,927
6	\$3,356
7	\$3,785
8	\$4,214



Each additional member + \$429 (Food and Nutrition Act of 2008/Annual Cost-of Living Adjustments for October 1, 2012)



Other CalFresh Programs (cont.)



CalFresh Employment and Training (E&T) Program

- An employment program for Non-assistance CalFresh households at county option. Individuals participate in a variety of activities designed to improve employability.
- Participants are reimbursed for transportation and other ancillary costs needed to take part in the E&T program.





Other CalFresh Programs (cont.)

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS)

- Non-Assistance CalFresh recipient over age 17 and under age 50 are limited to three months of eligibility within a 36-month period unless they satisfy the ABAWD work requirement or qualify for an ABAWD exemption.

Other CalFresh Programs (cont.)

The California Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

- A state funded program for legal noncitizen adults who meet all federal SNAP eligibility criteria except that they have resided in the U.S. less than 5 years.





Other CalFresh Programs (cont.)

Disaster CalFresh

- After a natural or man-made disaster occurs, and the affected area(s) receive a Presidential major disaster declaration for individual assistance, counties can request approval from FNS to operate a Disaster CalFresh program, which provides temporary food assistance to households affected by the disaster.



CalFresh Nutrition Education

CalFresh Nutrition Education (CNE)

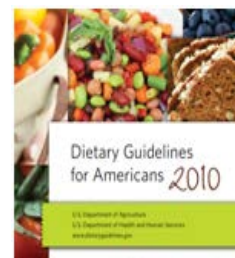
In order to improve the health and nutrition of California's low-income residents, CDSS has exercised the option to implement CalFresh Nutrition Education (CNE).

At the federal level, it is called SNAP Education (SNAP- Ed).

CalFresh Nutrition Education

Mission

“To improve the likelihood that SNAP-Ed eligible people will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current (2010) *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and My Plate.”



CalFresh Nutrition Education

CDSS provides oversight for California's Nutrition Education program and contracts with two agencies and directly funds numerous county welfare departments to administer SNAP-Ed:


Contracting Agencies:

- University of California at Davis' CalFresh Nutrition Education Program ([UC-CalFresh](#))
- California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* ([Network](#))
- California *Department of Food and Agriculture* (CDFA)



CalFresh Nutrition Education

Nutrition Education Services are provided at:

- Schools 
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Food Banks
- County Offices of Education
- CWDs



CalFresh Nutrition Education



**My budget.
My rules.**

**Rule #6:
Eat right when
money's tight.**



For food stamp information, call 877-847-3663. Funded by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, an equal opportunity provider and employer. Visit www.cachampionsforchange.net for healthy tips.

Why Outreach?

- Historically, participation in CalFresh is low.
- According to USDA only about one-half of those eligible participate in the program.



Improving access to CalFresh through Community Partnerships

- ***Educate clients, other partners, and stakeholders about CalFresh.***
- ***Help clients fill out the application (hard copy or online).***
- ***Help clients estimate CalFresh benefits.***
- ***Partner with counties to streamline access.***

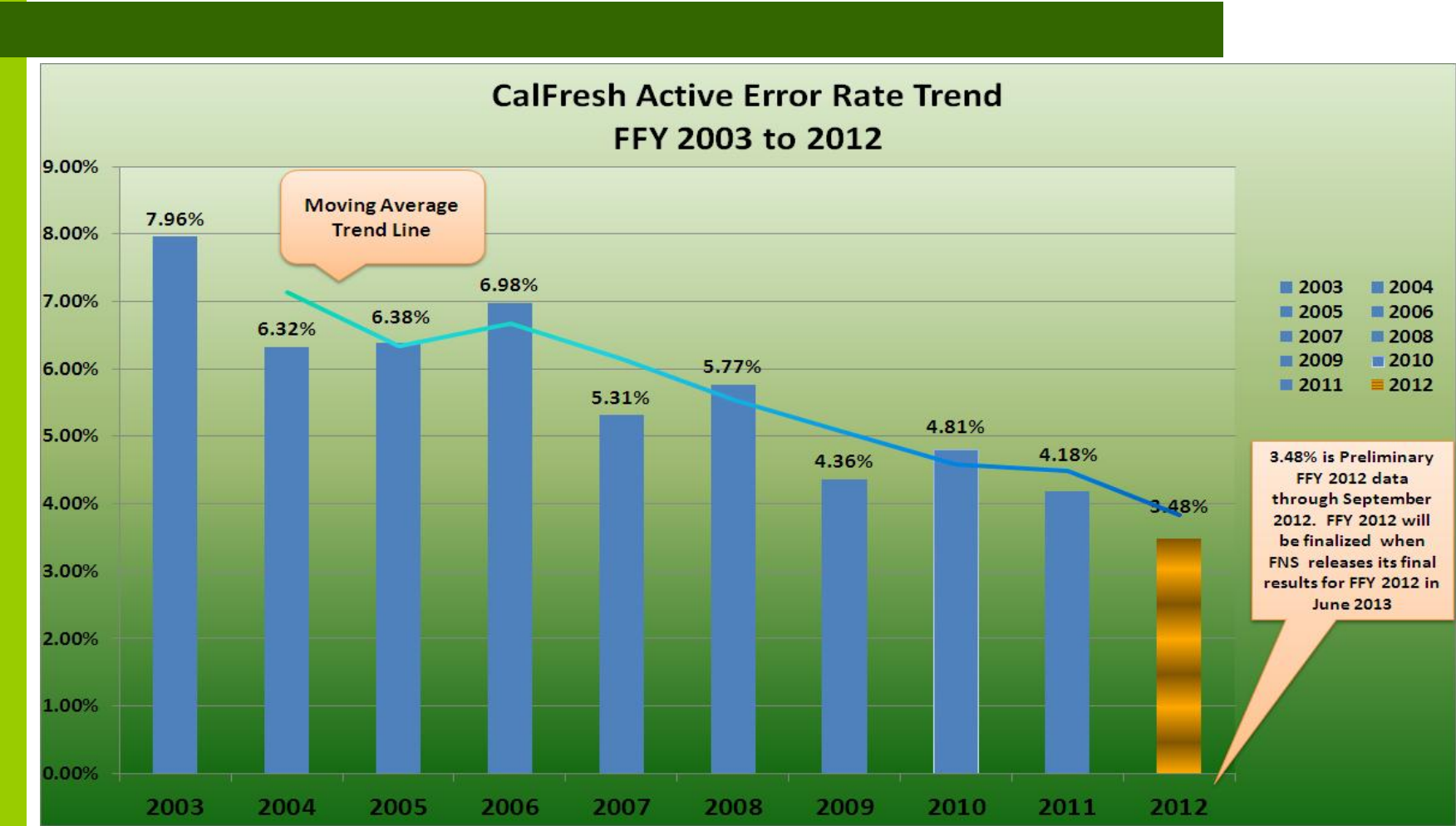


Other CalFresh Programs (cont.)

CalFresh Quality Control (QC)

- CDSS is required by the USDA, FNS, to measure the accuracy of CalFresh benefits issued by the counties.
- Many counties cases are reviewed by the state. The outcome of the reviews determine benefit issuance accuracy at the state and county levels.

Other CalFresh Programs (cont.)



Other CalFresh Programs (cont.)

Management Evaluation (ME) Reviews

- CDSS conducts ME reviews in all 58 counties and works with counties on an ongoing basis to develop annual Corrective Action Plans / Program Improvement Response to maintain and/or increase CalFresh payment accuracy.
- The review process includes oversight of county program access, timeliness, and payment accuracy.

Increasing CalFresh Participation

- CDSS, in collaboration with CWDA, requested that counties undertake a three-year goal-setting process to help achieve increased CalFresh participation within their county. There are many factors that contribute to individual county program participation, both demographically and economically; therefore by allowing counties to develop their own plans will allow customization that best serves their population and needs. The majority of the plans focused on:
 - in-reach and outreach efforts;
 - increasing program access;
 - addressing churning and retention of cases; and
 - the use of technology.

CalFresh ReFresh

- Last year, CDSS introduced the CalFresh Modernization Initiative, otherwise known as CalFresh ReFresh. CDSS solicited advocates, counties, and the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) for suggested ideas and improvements to the application and retention process with a goal to greater participation rates.
- The goal was to modernize the CalFresh program by planning for additional program simplifications and removal of access barriers, reducing administrative complexity, providing additional linkages with and coordination among other state assistance programs, providing stronger support for nutritious food choices and nutrition education, and greater encouragement of other program innovations.

CalFresh ReFresh

- **Automation Changes** –

- Case Management - This provides the ability to clients to have on-line case access to update information and to check benefit status without worker involvement. This is operational in all consortia with varying functionalities:
 - Completing the annual redetermination;
 - Completing address changes;
 - Reporting change in income or household members;
 - Submitting scanned documents;
 - Viewing correspondence;
 - Scheduling appointments; and
 - Auto-populating client identifying information.
- E-Notices – CDSS obtained a waiver from FNS to allow, at client option, the ability to send alerts to clients to let them know to check on line for a new notice as opposed to mailing notices of action.

CalFresh ReFresh

- Provide electronic verification of client income and assets – This proposal would utilize a business intelligence system to electronically search other federal and state agencies (Social Security, IEVS, Vital Statistics, etc.) to verify client receipt of income and assets when a CalFresh application is received. This has been impacted by the Covered California effort and work needs to be done to integrate and leverage that functionality.
- Allow use of telephonic signatures on applications – This would allow telephonic signatures (for client approval of an application or other forms) during a phone interview. This is in use in some counties now and is permissible due to a change in the State Plan.
- Implementing Regional or Consortia-based Call Centers. Call centers are now operational in 22 counties. This may be affected by the implementation of Covered California.

Increasing CalFresh Participation

- I appreciate the opportunity to share information about CalFresh and some of our recent accomplishments to enhance access to CalFresh. Much has been accomplished, but much work remains as millions of Californians remain eligible, but do not yet participate.
- CDSS is very committed to our continuing efforts and collaborating with our partners to make CalFresh more accessible and easier to use for both households and all other partners.

Questions??

